

Africa



WHITE SISTERS

MARCH-APRIL
1955



Hundreds of thousands of Africans are eagerly waiting for Missionary Sisters. The young need education. The aged and the sick need care. Others need social service workers to better their lives and bring them to God.

Nearly 100 of our young professed Sisters are now being trained as teachers, nurses or social service workers, who by their charity and kindness in educating and caring for the Africans will also win souls for our Lord.

The cost is a heavy burden for the Congregation. Would you not like to help relieve it and win souls for our Lord? Be a Missionary by proxy, offering your **LENTEN SACRIFICE** that others may care for **CHRIST'S POOR** in your place.

WHITE SISTERS, 319 Middlesex Ave., Metuchen, N. J.

Dear Sisters:

As a lenten offering I enclose \$..... to help in the great work of winning African souls.

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

TUNISIAN GIRLS

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

A FORMER PICTURE: Tunisian girls are listless and not wishing to take up any work, they drag the weary hours of their uselessness throughout the whole long day; they have no food for their intellect, and they find the manual labor of housekeeping has no interest for them. The narrow circle of their thoughts and ambitions holds nothing more thrilling than the preparation of some elaborate cookies, the selection of various articles of a wealthy wedding trousseau and the mysterious and harmful gossiping and backbiting about their neighbors . . . Let us view those pretty creatures.

Since they've always been kept in ignorance of everything, they are unable even to read or write; they hang about without any aim, personality or enthusiasm, but simply resigned to their fate. Except for the outings seldom required for ritual baths, to which they are driven in strictly closed carriages, they

never go out of doors, because custom and masculine jealousy keep them out of sight." Some of these girls have been pupils of an old "MEDDEB" who gave them some religious instruction and taught them to say by rote verses from the Koran . . . but they were the few privileged ones. Once a week, a pleasant event takes place which makes the day for our young ladies: The needle-work mistress comes! Then they take an interest in life, as if awakening from a long sleep. The Mistress, who goes about freely wherever she wishes, knows so many things! She tells them that beautiful little Fatma is expected to be engaged soon . . . and Amar and his wife do nothing but quarrel . . . and she can describe the wedding garment that Lalla Laida intends to wear . . . Oh, how they love those bright hours, filled with empty and childish conversations, and peals of happy laughter . . . But when the



OUR FRONT COVER

Paddling their home-made canoe along the shores of one of the Great Lakes is always an adventure for the Young African. It is the Missionary's task to prepare him to "paddle his own canoe" through the sunshine and storms of later life.



An art class at Lavigerie School

master of the house comes home, the gay voices are hushed . . . even the merry smiles fade away, each girl resumes an enigmatic countenance and a modest attitude. A well-behaved maiden may neither laugh nor sing in the presence of her father . . . Therefore, they return to ordinary routine, which means loneliness and boredom, that will drag on monotonously for hours and days. Poor Youth, without yearning . . . without ideal!

PRESENT-DAY PICTURE: A crowd of white veiled girls alight from the bus coming from La Marsa. They hurry up the avenue edged with palm trees and rush into Lavigerie School. Let us follow these Tunisian girls.

"Good Morning, Sister, how glad

we are to be here again." Thereupon the group of artists (for these are Art students) make haste to settle to work. Off and away, flow the white veils which cover them from head to foot; and, as if by a magic stroke, we behold charming young girls, now wearing French attire. Easels, palettes, models are taken out and sorted by their owners, and each pupil makes herself at home. The Sister in charge is there welcoming everyone; she seems to be their older sister, to whom they have so many things to relate.

How they chat! How agile their slender fingers are! Draw near to the easels and see. Here darling kittens have been painted; there, the head of an old Bedouin. Here is a view of a ship out at sea. Over

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there, from this girl's brush and talent, is a Sahara landscape, bathing in the sunshine; and then we come upon a bunch of roses, the painting of which has been achieved by that other pupil. Oh! yes, of course, they call Sister time and again, for she is important. She must with a patient hand correct this or that which is too poorly executed. But in perfect truth, how earnest is their application to labor and how genuine is their joy from duty fulfilled. The atmosphere is one of a home where the children rely on each other.

Now we are privileged to hear the inevitable urgent, world-wide reminder . . . A pleading for a favor that is asked for thousands of times in our schools: "Sister, a story, please!" In fact, this is the appointed day and hour for stories. It is an opportunity for sowing the seeds that will germinate later. We have provision for amusing tales, as well as for pathetic ones; then the apologies that can never be left aside in an oriental gathering. All

eyes are aglow with attention on the speaker; paint-brushes are laid aside. Sister readily finds some wholesome thought, and in her heart she cherishes the high ideals that will raise the souls of her audience to God. Between herself and her pupils there is a strong link, a point of contact which is not just sympathy, but rather an interest that elevates. When the bell sounds for the end of the period, the pupils disperse reluctantly, because it is time to go home. How pretty the White silhouettes appear as they stroll down the avenue of palm trees. The girls are taking home some wisely selected literature for the week and some friendly advice in view of their own improvement.

Such contracts, such mutual trust are most necessary for young girls in whom life is awakening. It is a Spring-time, starting to blossom forth from ancient houses with wire trellised windows.

Sr. M. ANNE FRANCIS

A Fishy Story

"You haven't grown taller or stronger since I left you two years ago, dear little girl!"

"No, Sister, but I've GROWED in other ways, and I can assure my growth by the number of fish I eat. Remember when you left us for the hill country? I used to refuse to eat fish then, because it had such an ugly head. I refused to eat the head because of the pair of eyes staring at me in my dish . . . Refused to eat the eyeballs because of the stuff that was inside them . . . Remember, Sister?"

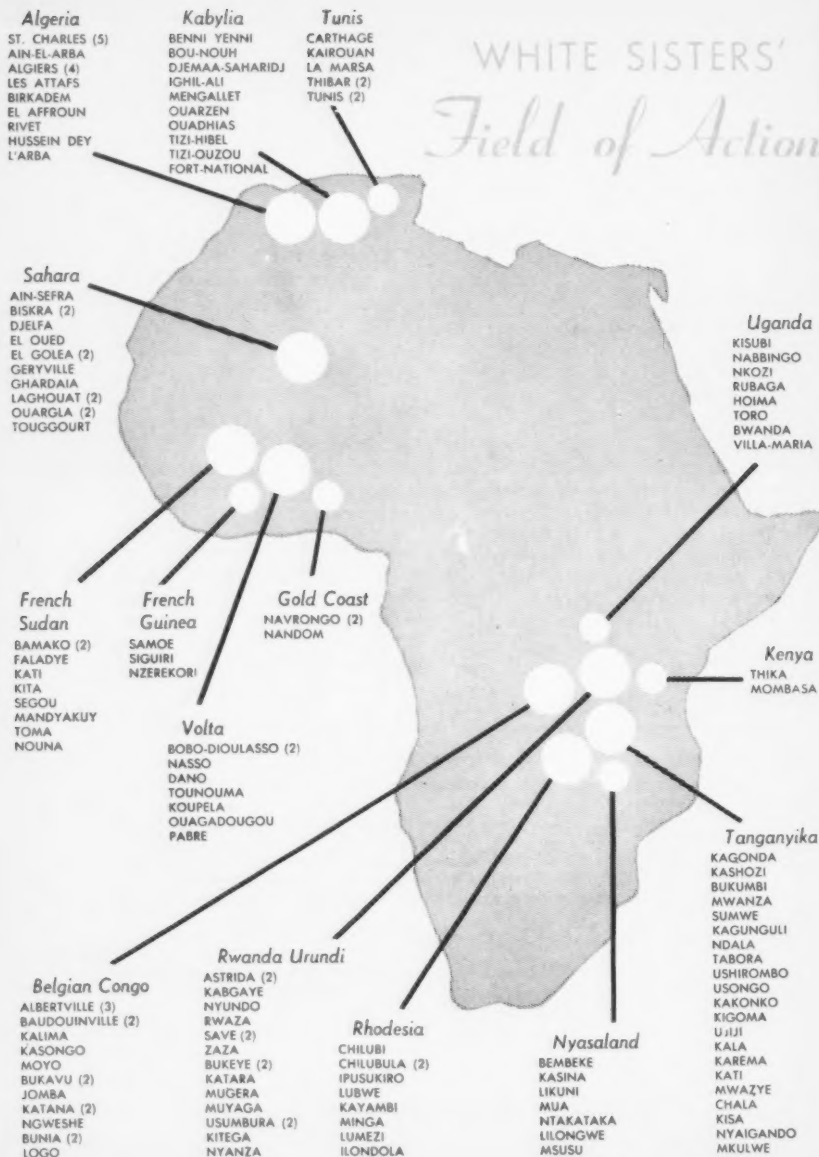
"Oh yes, Maria Tiba, I do remember, but what has that fishy story to do with your not growing?"

"Well, you see, Sister, I've GROWED out of being such a fussy kid. If you don't believe me, come and watch next Friday (a fish-day) at lunch. First of all, I love fish, especially the head with all its mixed tastes; I always save the eyes for the tit bit at the last and when all is over I rise from my meal and say: I give Thee thanks, O Lord, for this fish and all Thy benefits."

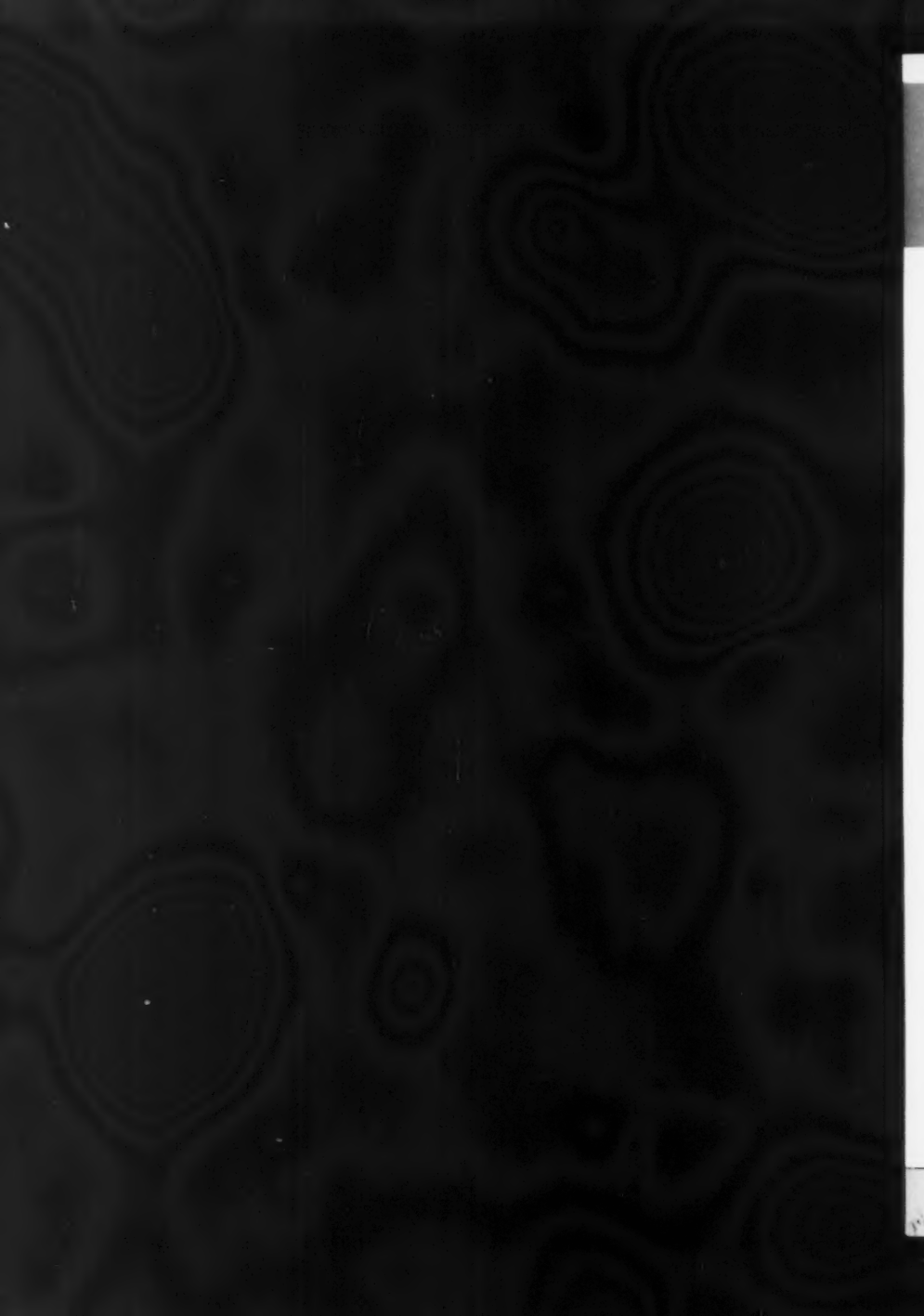
"Haven't I GROWED well?"

Sr. St. DENIS, W. S.

WHITE SISTERS' Field of Action







CHRIST *for* AFRICA AFRICA *for* CHRIST

This is the whole aim
and endeavor of the
MISSIONARY SISTERS
OF OUR
LADY OF AFRICA
(*The White Sisters*)

Placed from its origin under the special protection of our Blessed Mother, this international Congregation was founded in 1869 by Cardinal Lavigerie to cooperate with the White Fathers in Africa. Its apostolate is exclusively African and embraces every form of educational, social and medical activity that can help the physical and spiritual welfare of African women.

The General Motherhouse is in Africa itself. To it the Sisters go after being trained in their own country: the United States, Canada, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Spain or Switzerland. From it they go forth to second the White Fathers in the building of the Church in Africa; they exercise their apostolate in Uganda, Kenya, Tanganyika, Nyasaland, Rhodesia, Belgian Congo, Gold Coast, French West and North Africa.



WINNING SOULS

HOW A WHITE SISTER DOES IT

"He who by supernatural inspiration, is called to make the Truth of the Gospel flower among distant pagan nations, is dedicated to a great, lofty task: he actually dedicates his life to God for the propagation of His Reign even to the ends of the earth. . . He must therefore consider as a second homeland the land to which he brings the light of the Gospels."

POPE PIUS XII

MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Each mission post has a more or less complete dispensary, which renders very important social services: among others, the arresting of endemic diseases and of plagues, and the training of women in hygiene and child care.

Statistics show that 53 missions are fortunate enough to have a hospital; 48 maternity clinics have given thousands of women prenatal care and assistance in delivery; 40 Child welfare Centers have saved the lives of countless children. Tens of thousands of leprosy patients receive treatment either in our dispensaries or by Sisters visiting them in their homes, while a large number are cared for in our six leprosaria.

EDUCATION

The activities in the field of African education are as varied as they are vast. The White Sisters have nearly 300 schools and workrooms throughout Africa. Some of

them are of course necessarily quite primitive, while others can compare very favorably with finishing schools here at home.

For example, Holy Trinity Secondary School at Nabbingo, Uganda, for young girls wishing to continue their education, has classes in English literature, mathematics, latin, history, geography, geometry, music, art, biology, hygiene and domestic science, all this plus a lively program of sports.

For a contrast in everything but spirit, there are the bush schools where the main subjects are the three R's—simple buildings, in some cases no desks or benches—but it is a pleasure for the White Sister to see the eagerness with which the children of these primitive areas apply themselves to their studies.

At the White Sisters' Training Centers, many African girls have successfully obtained their teaching or nursing diplomas which enables them to take an active part in the development of their own country.

A hundred thousand women and girls, who are unable to follow a regular program, are given a more elementary, but nevertheless extremely useful education.

Preparation for Baptism and First Holy Communion takes up much of the Sisters' time, but their favorite work seems to be the training of autonomous religious congregations. This is only natural, for Missionaries who are dedicated to the establishment of the Church in pagan countries must give the Church in these lands all the things necessary for its proper functioning.

African Sisters play in their own country a role similar to that of the teaching, nursing or visiting Sisters in America. So far, the White Sisters have trained over thirteen hundred African Sisters, forming 17 diocesan Congregations.

But what a combination of good natural qualities and supernatural graces are needed to achieve this result! Their religious and intellectual training and education must change these young girls, whose background and experience have been completely pagan, into true religious, Brides of Christ, wholeheartedly dedicated to the salvation of their people.



Learning to knit is very fascinating for the African schoolgirl

Apostolic Training of the White Sisters

To apply herself to these various duties, the White Sister must receive three different kinds of training: technical, African and missionary.

Those who do not have the necessary diplomas to engage in medical or educational activities may be sent to study for a government certificate as a nurse, teacher, social worker or health visitor. No matter what her work is, the White Sister must always be competent and keen to improve.

As for the Sisters who do housework or agricultural work, they render a real service to the Congregation in the training of Africans in these activities, without which community life could not exist. These Sisters are also educators: the influence they exert over their helpers allows them to awaken in these souls a consciousness of the dignity of work and the love of a job well done.

Some of these Sisters may be put in charge of a group of young girls whom they will prepare for their future as wives and mothers, and whom they will continue to see after marriage, going to visit them in their homes and becoming the ever more trusted counselors in sad as in happy times.

For the success of all these activities, a knowledge of the native language and customs is essential. In the dispensary, at the hospital, in his home, the African tells of his ills in his own tongue. In the schools, the pupils understand explanations best in their own lan-

guage. What is more, there are certain honorable customs, certain ancient practices that are contrary to our own ways, but which cannot be ignored without deep hurt to African souls.

Therefore it is necessary for the Sisters to learn as well as possible the language and customs of the people they wish to teach.

A difficult and painful study is that of the Arabic and Berber languages, for while they are extremely eloquent, their thoroughly oriental niceties and complexities are bewildering to our Western logic. Sisters destined for North Africa are sent to two special centers, the School of Arabic studies at Tunis and that of Berber Studies at Tizi-Ouzou. For two years, they strive to imbue the Arabic or Berber culture, studying grammar, diction, vocabulary, art, civilization, beliefs and superstitions.

In equatorial Africa, where each tribe has its own language and customs, it is not possible to provide one school for all the Sisters; each one must study when she arrives at her post, until she can converse with the Africans and thus begin to fill her post adequately and fruitfully.

But this African training, no matter how complete it might be, would be only a personal achievement, without value for Eternity, if it were not inspired by the love of God and the burning desire to gain souls for Him.

The White Sister strives to acquire knowledge of Africa only to







To prepare themselves for the life on the missions, the novices must learn many crafts ... even the art of peeling potatoes



Well trained wives and mothers will play an important role in the future of Africa

be a better Missionary; in order to make God and the Gospel known, she must dole out her teachings in the measure of her audience's capacity, she must gauge the wavelength that will reach her hearers' hearts.

Her principal task—her only task—is the apostolate, the influence of soul upon soul . . . As a nurse, as an educator, certainly she wishes to cure the sick, to teach her pupils; but her final goal is more noble still: to these pagans, she will show God!

If their fanaticism and their incomprehension refuse to believe in Christ, she will still repeat her divine story: the parables, the Ser-

mon on the Mount . . . To the souls capable of receiving it, she will show the splendor of the Catholic Faith. For all, she will be the "witness of Christ", and her life of humble and patient charity, of simplicity and zeal, is a testimonial which no one can deny.

She gives herself wholeheartedly to her missionary task, and her joy is great when the flame of Christianity is fed by adult Baptisms and numerous conversions.

In the Moslem countries, her task is less rewarding and requires great self-denial; she will not see the result of her labors, but she knows that her work will not be fruitless. "One sows, and another reaps" the Master has said.

Moslem at prayer







The Stamp of the Missionary

At first glance, the exterior activity of a White Sister seems similar to that of a Religious engaged in the same tasks in America; nevertheless, the White Sister's work is stamped with a very distinct missionary character.



The White Sister is essentially a Missionary when, at the hospital or dispensary, she speaks of God, the Master of life and death, and grasps the opportunity to teach her patients how to pray.



She is a Missionary when, in her class, she stimulates discussions that may bring souls to the Light...

She is a Missionary when, having obtained her diplomas, she trains the elite of the African, thus preparing the future of these people whose evolution is taking place at breathtaking pace.





She is a Missionary when, as a musician or artist, she shows forth the beauty of her interior life to awaken in the souls of young Africans a love of the good and the beautiful.



She is a Missionary when, as a medical doctor or pharmacist, she trains African Religious and nurses to care for the sick and to do research work while she herself strives to find the best way of fighting tropical diseases.



She is a Missionary when, as a leader of Scouts, she teaches young girls the supernatural value of a good deed.



She is a Missionary when, by repeated contacts and active charity, she finally gains the confidence of families who were openly hostile to the Mission.

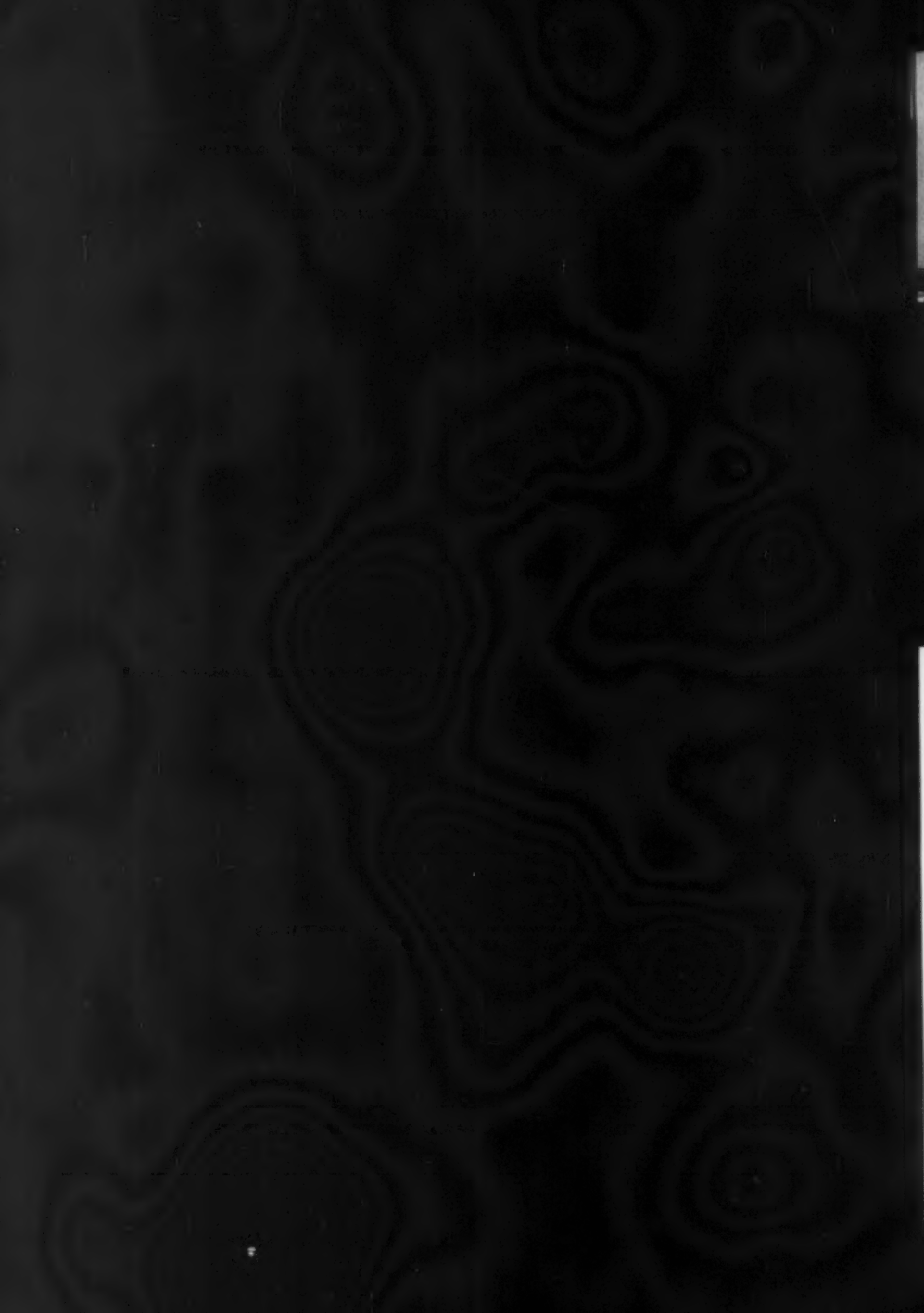


She is a Missionary—and her intercessory power is limitless—when she lies sick or infirm, offering her sufferings and her forced inactivity for the Mission she has had to leave.



She is a Missionary to her last breath, for the White Sister offers her death as the final sacrifice, joyously given for souls and for Africa, and presents to the Master of the Harvest her sheaves heavy with grain!







"I express in words my unshakable hope of seeing that part of this great continent, which was Catholic, return to the light and truth, and those regions, which up to now have remained in the most terrible state of barbarism, emerge from darkness and from death. It is to this task that I have consecrated my life. But what is the life of one man for such an undertaking? I have hardly been able to do more than outline the work. I have only been the VOICE FROM THE DESERT calling those who must BLAZE THE TRAIL for the GOSPEL. Africa, I die without doing more for you than suffer and by these sufferings to prepare apostles for you."

CARDINAL LAVIGERIE,
Founder of the White Fathers
and White Sisters.

The apostolic character is also apparent in the spirit which animates the White Sisters. "Africa", wrote Cardinal Lavigerie to the first White Sisters, "is the constant object of your thoughts, of your devotion, of your prayers."

These words, written in 1876, bear weight to this day. Following the example of their Founder, the White Sister continually speaks to God and to Mary of "her Africa"; she feels a need to make her interior life more fervent in order to make her apostolate more fruitful; she feels in some way responsible for the souls around her; she wants to adore, to love, to make

reparation for them.

"To save the world", wrote Cardinal Lavigerie, "to speak is not enough; suffering is needed . . . Therefore the apostle, no matter how eloquent his words, will accomplish nothing if he does not know how to devote himself and how to suffer." And the White Sister adds, in the Cardinal's words: "I will spare no trouble in establishing God's Work . . ."

The following article will give a clear idea of this work by describing a day in the life of a community of White Sisters in a mission post, for instance in the bush of Central Africa.

WHITE SISTERS' LIFE ON THE MISSIONS



At 4:30 a.m., the bell rings to awaken the Sisters: then follow morning prayer, meditation, the first Rosary (which, for the White Sisters, replaces the Divine Office), Holy Mass, Communion, and Thanksgiving. For almost two hours, the Religious is united with Christ in the intimacy of prayer, and in the even greater intimacy of the Eucharistic union. At 7 o'clock, she is ready to give God to souls; besides, pupils are already arriving at the school, and some patients have gathered before the door of the dispensary.

These patients come from a distance; they may have walked 15 to 20 miles to show their ailing eyes to the Sister oculist — and they want to be the first to get in! From 7 to 11 a.m., the Sister infirmarians and their assistants see all manner of ills pass before them; they cleanse and bind up the most nauseating sores, they treat diseases unknown in America . . . but more than all this, they help their patients by their kind words full of supernatural charity.

Let us look in at the Nursery: several babies have lost their mothers, and Sister is explaining

to the volunteer foster-mothers how to prepare the feedings; to-day, however she is suddenly called for a dying child; "He lives in a pagan section, Sister, and his mother won't let anyone get near him, for fear they might cast a spell on him!" Sister snatches up her kit and hurriedly follows the little guide, murmuring: "My God, please give me this little soul." The mother lets Sister approach her child . . . and, a few hours later, Heaven gains another soul.

It is 11 o'clock: the sun glares down, and the torrid atmosphere outside makes the little chapel seem almost cool when the Sisters enter it for a spiritual exercise: one must thank God for the graces of the morning, and zealously resume the accent to perfection.

After the midday meal, thanksgiving and siesta, a short recreation brings the Sisters together, a happy moment of relaxation. After this brief interval, the Sisters gather once more in the chapel for the second Rosary which is their garland of praise to Mary. Half an hour of spiritual reading revives the spirit of faith in each one's heart. Work follows: let us accom-

pany the Sister infirmarians who set out on bicycles to visit the sick in a distant village.

How bare are these poor mud huts! The twelve-year-old boy, dying of dysentery is lying on his mat laid directly on the ground, without even a drop of water within his reach. When a gourd full of water is handed to him, Peter drinks it in one gulp. The Sister treats him as best she can with the drugs she has brought, for she must still try to save him . . . "Sister", says Peter in a whisper, "I am happy to die; in Heaven I will convert my parents" . . .

In another pagan quarter, a poor dying woman, stifling in her hut, has been carried outside. Her pillow is a rough block of wood . . . Could not someone at least put a piece of cloth over it? Her neighbors are indifferent, but the dying woman hears the Sister speak of God, of repentance for sins, of Heaven . . .

Sometimes, they try to give a health hint, to inculcate some notions of proper child care—but the older women curl their lips. "Have we not always cared for our children that way?"

On the way home, we stop at some huts near the dispensary: several lepers are housed there. Each day they follow faithfully their Catechism lesson. Many of these poor sufferers know that their days are numbered; they have but a short time to learn the essential truths in order to receive Baptism.

When evening comes, the Sisters return to the chapel for a visit to



Recreation: busy hands never lose a moment

the Blessed Sacrament and the third Rosary. After the evening meal, there is a lively recreation, at which are related the events of the day: the 300 pupils of the boys' school (which is preparatory for entry in the seminary) are excited about the quarterly exams; the girls' school had a normal day; the pupils of the handicraft school are working hard to prepare an exhibition of their work. The Sister Catechist had all her pupils today, and the examinations for Baptism will be given in ten days.

The Sister who visits families tells heart-warming tales. James, who until now has been a well-salaried clerk, is leaving his work to enter the Catechist's school; his mother is happy about the decision which she herself has helped to bring about. "But James will no longer earn anything", the Sister objected to her, "and you will have to cultivate your land like a poor woman!" "That does not matter, as long as James makes God known!"



Night Folks: Lord, send more laborers

A graduate of the girls' school is earnestly asking admittance into the Congregation of African Sisters, and John, the seminarian who was once a pupil of the Sisters, will soon be ordained a priest . . .

It is now 8:30, time for evening prayer, for the great silence to enfold until the morning, the little convent which stands like a beacon light in the darkness of the great African bush.

For the mission stations are from 30 to 60 miles apart, or even more . . . Between the missions there are villages full of pagans who are waiting for enlightenment; they want to leave their ancient fetishes, but they do not know the Missionaries . . .

The 145 stations of the Mission-

ary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa are little islands lost in the immensity of Africa. To the White Fathers and to the Sisters, the Africans themselves appeal for establishment of new posts . . . owing to lack of personnel, their requests cannot be granted.

There are millions of souls whom no Missionary has contacted, millions of souls who have never heard of the Redemption and whose anguished cry awakens sorrowful echoes in hearts filled with the love of Christ. Their despairing S.O.S. goes out to all the world: *Save Our Souls!*

The harvest is ready, but there is no one to gather in the wheat . . . Lord, send more workers into Your harvest!







The young postulant looks beyond her two years of training to the time, like her elder Sister, she will stand robed in white, rosary at her side, ready to sail at God's command for far distant Africa in quest of souls.



SUCH ARE

mothers!

"Tell me," was the anxious query, "are you really happy with the White Sisters?"

Brow wrinkled with concern, the penetrating eyes searched the young girl's face for the answer her mother's heart had to know.

"Don't you miss, and perhaps regret, all you have given up to be here? Tell me honestly, daughter, wouldn't you rather be back home?"

It was eventide and the dusk of the setting sun united their hearts in the same intimacy they had known, it seemed now, oh so long ago. It was the first time she had seen her baby in the white habit of the Missionary Sisters of our Lady of Africa, and she wondered if interiorly there had been as great changes, too. From infancy she had watched and known the growth that time had wrought, that is, until now. Would this young nun, seemingly so competent and independent, be a stranger to her, she wondered. The lines in her face showed the anguish she felt within her heart.

They were seated on a garden bench before the answer was forthcoming. Then taking her mother's hands in her own, the little Sister replied in a quiet, convincing tone of voice, "Yes, mother, I am happy—the White Sisters are everything I have ever dreamed of, and desired. God grant that I may be worthy of them." Her sincerity was unmistakable.

It was the answer her heart had longed for, but even now, she wanted still more. Senseing her mother's need, and feeling a certain joy in giving voice to the peace and happiness she felt within, she did not delay to continue.

"How shall I ever make you understand, mother, what it is like to be a White Sister? Mere words can never express the deep satisfaction, peace and joy it is to teach God to those who know Him not, or tell what it means to bring comfort and relief where there would be none if you were not there." Her mother pondered these words carefully.

"Perhaps you are wondering what sort of people are the Arabs," the little Sister continued earnestly. "They are good, mother, really they are. I know you must have heard that they are thieves, liars, mean and ungrateful. Some are of course. But as a whole? Definitely not. The women, the poor women who remain especially our responsibility, are for the most part kind and responsive to the least service we render, and we often see in them a maternal love for their children which can reach even to the heroic."

She clasped her mother's hands more tightly as if that would make her appreciate more clearly what she was saying. "You see, mother, even though the setting differs, the Arab feels the same pride in their children as we. She carries her concern to exaggeration in the usual childhood diseases, when she isolates herself in the sole room of the house to sit for hours on end beside the sick child in darkness and quietude. It is uncanny, mother, the way an Arab mother can detect the eminence of death. When she says 'My baby is very ill, he will not live,' there is little hope he will survive. However, we continue to do what we can to save that precious life."

They both settled back, completely at ease. "I wish you would have been there," Sister resumed, "when we called on a neighbor recently. Fatma was giving her six months old daughter her morning bath. What was different was the eye-shadow she applied over and above the eyes of one so young,

with dye to tint the tiny fingernails. The little one did not protest but seemed to expect such attentions as her due. Every nation has their own particular pride and vanity.

"These people so devoid of all idealism are capable of the noblest sentiments of motherhood, which I do believe may very well be the agent God will use in their regeneration.

"This was brought home to me very forcibly when we visited two well-educated Moslem girls recently. They had bought a gaudy reprint of an Italian Nativity scene at a Bazar in Carthage which they found to be very beautiful. They were taken by 'The Pretty Baby' and 'Its sad Mother' and asked what the meaning could possibly be. Their earnestness and direct questions compelled me to answer and I revealed the broad outline of man's redemption to them. They were deeply moved on hearing it for the very first time and neither interrupted or allowed me to stop.

"It seemed to me at that moment 'The Pretty Baby' and 'Its sad Mother' were really present and smiling down on our little group. All the while I was praying in my heart, you know I was, mother, that This Mother of all mothers would draw them into her abundant affection, and teach them the love of her Infant Son.

"It is the price you and other mothers have paid through your sacrifices and tears to obtain this grace for all hearts, especially the hearts of mothers."

Sr. Paul Emile tells of the **URGENT NEED of MISSIONARIES**

Recently we returned to visit Kapamba, a bush village which we had contacted during our last vacation period. By "we" I mean a White Father and his Catechists, two African Sisters, and two White Sisters. The natives receive the Missionaries on such occasions with the greatest faith and simplicity, and with much joy. On our arrival there was a general assembly of everyone in the village, and after the customary, lengthy salutations, the assignment of the Christians to different groups for catechism. Each of these, numbering about twenty persons, was placed under the supervision of one of the catechists or Sisters.

There are still many pagans among the villagers and some of these would have liked to infiltrate

among the Christians, so that they too could "partake of the bread of the children of God." But unfortunately we had to tell them they would have to wait a while yet. We are not sufficient in number to accomplish our work seriously among so many and so,—to avoid superficiality, we restrict our activities to a comparatively few and pursue it to profundity — so that through a well-formed minority we can,

through them, reach the majority. It goes without saying it rends our hearts to be obliged to do this, especially when it is a question of souls that is at stake. How we would like to have a hundred lives so that we could spend them all that Christ's reign might be extended to include everyone.

SR. PAUL EMILE, W.S.

Young girls desiring further information may write to:

**MOTHER SUPERIOR,
WHITE SISTERS' CONVENT,
MARY GLENN, R. D. 2,
FRANKLIN, PA.**

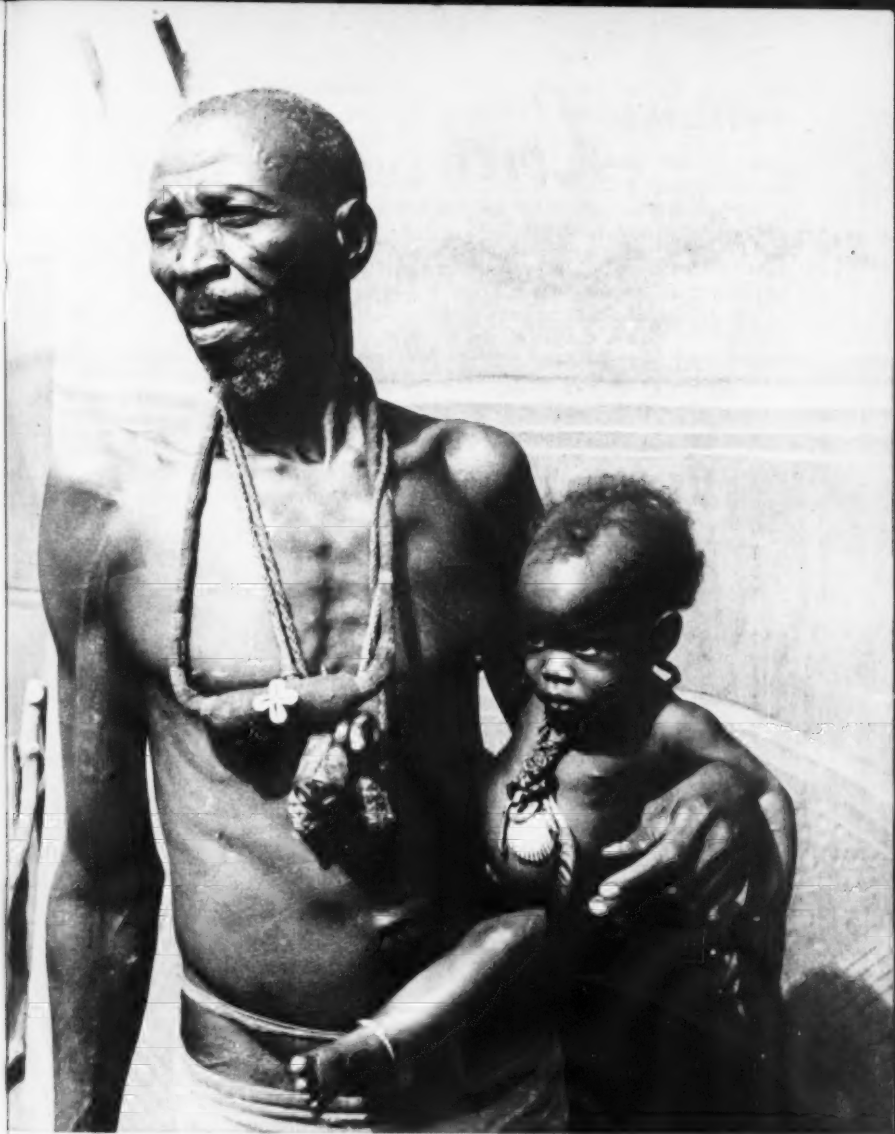
PLANNING THE FUTURE

If one has the desire to pioneer, to blaze the trail which makes for imperishable greatness let him or her consider the vocation to the religious life. Our scientists, deep in research, are encouraged by their desire to alleviate the physical ills of mankind. Our priests, brothers and sisters, whether in the hospitals or laboratories of this or mission lands, devise new means to help, not merely the physical, but the spiritual ailments of the unfortunate under their care.

If youth desires fame of the immortal kind, indestructible in the face of time and decay, let him heed the voice which quietly urges him "Come follow Me."

If youth wants to acquire the essence of bravery let him give careful thought to the idea of a life dedicated to God!

*RT. REV. MSCR. GEORGE J. HURLEY, Director of the Society
for the Propagation of the Faith, Springfield, Mass.*



Weighed down by superstitions and beliefs of paganism, he looks for a deliverer.

Lent AND THEIR FEAST . . .

The tradition of fasting exists among Moslems, but how strangely different it is from ours . . .

The Ramadan, as their period of fasting is called, lasts a lunar month. All the followers of Mohammed look intently at a given point in the sky when the crescent moon makes its appearance and acclaim it enthusiastically. The fast will last until that moon has finished its course.

By way of explanation for the sudden change in the household, children are told: "Sidi (Mr.) Ramaden has arrived"; and so, from their early years they fall in with the customs of their fathers.

The change is indeed a marked one: night becomes day, and day night; from dawn to dusk no Moslem may eat, drink, or even smoke. The Ramadan Rites are many and intricate: venerable "Sheiks" will be seen fingering their beads as they stroll solemnly about wearing bands over their mouths so that no particle of dust will be swallowed.

In more populated areas a gun fired at dusk warns all the people that the day's fast is ended. A strange rumble answers the signal, and immediately parched lips will be refreshed by cold drinks. Then follows the first meal.

In country places without clocks the fervent Moslem has on him a white thread and a black one. As soon as he can no longer distin-

guish the one from the other he can safely slake his thirst and satisfy his hunger.

Eating is allowed all through the night, and a second full meal is generally taken before sunrise. In fact, in towns, a watchman knocks at every door in good time for the second "Banquet."

The Ramadan binds only those in their teens and upwards; however, younger children often fast . . . to be like their elders, and especially to share in the nocturnal feasting.

There is no human respect about religious observances in Islam—a Moslem is ashamed of being considered slack, not of ranking as one of the devout.

There is no upward limit of age for fasting. Women and the sick exaggerate the rigidity of the Ramadan laws. In so doing they are against the Koran, for in it we read that not only he who detracts from the law, but also he who exaggerates its obligations is an infidel.

Missionaries in their hospitals and dispensaries disprove of these exaggerations. Educated men listen and are sometimes won over to reason, but women are adamant in their belief, however erroneous. They would never dream of infringing the laws of fasting as their husbands, brothers and sons often do on the sly, especially those living in towns. Women fast in all circumstances, even

when nursing their children. A young mother is allowed to give up fasting for a fortnight, but she will make the very least possible use of this dispensation, for she is obliged to take back a fast of as many days, later in the year, and then there will be no rejoicing and no banqueting, none of the compensations that somewhat mitigate the hardships of the Ramadan.

Even the sick refuse nourishment, and medicines are accepted for the night only! Sometimes discussions arise in the hospital wards as to whether an injection or a drop in the eye is permissible!

For some dispensaries, even ophthalmic centres, the Ramadan is the dead season.

Ramadan disturbs family life and is made an excuse for many



*Dressed in
her best*

things: "It cannot be helped! It is Ramadan!" etc. Much daytime goes in cooking for the night, and more care is taken than at any other period of the year to make dishes as savory as possible.

The Moslem year being lunar, the Ramadan and all their feasts are movable and may fall in the dead of winter as easily as in midsummer. Some "fasters" dread fasting in winter most, but most of them find it hardest in the hottest season when it is no trifle not to even moisten one's lips all through the day. It is beyond doubt that, for all those obliged to work as usual, despite their shortened sleep, for women and the sick particularly, the Ramadan is an arduous mortification entailing much privation and fatigue, the more so because mutual encouragement to self-sacrifice is completely unknown. Were it all offered to God in expiation for sin, what a blessing it would bring! But unhappily, interior religion is generally absent. However, Moslems believe that Heaven is assured to the faithful observers of the Ramadan fast if they die within the year.

May God bless the good faith of these poor souls in His great mercy and enlighten them as to the truth.

AID-EL-KBIR (The Great Feast).—The close of the Ramadan is marked by a feast known as Aid-el-asir (the little feast). I would willingly alter the meaning and call it "The Little Ones' Feast," for parents deck children in their finest clothes and spoil them with sweetmeats of every description.

The chief feast of the Moslem year is "Aid-el-kbir," also called "Feast of the Lamb." It recalls the solemn biblical feast without its figurative and Christian meaning. In Mecca it is ended by the sacrifice of thousands of bullocks, camels and sheep. All countries where Arabic is spoken, the Koran read, and the "Shahada" (Islamic formula) recited, follow suit in lesser proportions.

For Moslems this sacrifice recalls Abraham's offering of Isaac. The other day a woman said to me: "Well, Sister, had Abraham killed his son, we should have had to do the same; but God, satisfied with His faithful servant's heroic obedience, sent an angel to intervene: a ram was sacrificed on the altar prepared for his son."

The lamb for the Aid makes its appearance in many homes as early as a month or even two before the feast. It is the children's playmate and part of the household. Sometimes it is decorated with bows of ribbon and its hoofs are dyed in henna! It is certainly no longer a common lamb, but the chosen and privileged one.

On *the* day, richly clad Arabs will be seen giving each other the kiss of peace as they meet on their way to the mosque. Meanwhile, women are busy preparing the feast. The lamb, which must be slain by the head of the family, is exposed to view for the greater part of the day, as the Lamb of God has been on Calvary.

The Arabs do not know what Christians can read into their custom!

SISTER GEORGE MARIE



NEWS

Having completed their Postulate at Mary Glenn, eight postulants received the religious habit of the White Sisters at the Novitiate in Belleville, Ill. His Excellency, Bishop Zuroweste, presided over the ceremony. After 18 months Novitiate they will sail for Africa to blaze the trail of the Gospel in response to Cardinal Lavigerie's voice calling from the desert.

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Mother M. David, W. S. was made a Member of the Order of Civil Merit by the French Government in reward for her devotedness to the victims of the earthquake that took place in Algeria. Ever since the great disaster the earth has continued to quake frequently. Though the White Sisters' Hospital of the Attafs was not destroyed at the time of the earthquake, the continuation of the vibrations caused a great deal of damage, which must be repaired. In the meanwhile, Mother M. David and the Sisters who staff the hospital are obliged to sleep under tents. At this time of the year it is cold in North Africa.

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The Leprosarium of Mua, in Nyasaland, celebrated the 25th anniversary of its foundation. Bishop Fady, with other White Fathers, came for the ceremony. His Excellency began by blessing a bell for the church. Then there was

solemn Benediction with a sermon, followed by a procession. The lepers, carrying lighted candles, went hobbling along to the new Grotto of the Blessed Virgin, built for the patients and inaugurated for the anniversary. The next morning, after a Pontifical Mass, a banquet was served to the poor lepers. Pigs and goats were the victims, for without meat there is no rejoicing. Then, to the sound of the tom toms, different dances succeeded one another.

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Cloistered Sisters will settle in Mwanza, Tanganyika Territory. A community of Poor Clares arrived from India and are staying with the White Sisters until their cloister convent will be built. In the meantime, the Sisters are happy to make known their guests and the aim of their life of prayer and penance, as well as their need for support, to the Europeans, Indians and Africans of Mwanza and its surroundings.

All are most willing to help. The Poor Clares by their life of prayer and penance will bring down many blessings upon the mission and contribute to the conversion of the inhabitants of Mwanza.

The Mau Mau are still active. Recently they captured a European 70 years old, after strangling his wife. Despite a great deal of searching the man could not be found. It is thought that he was buried alive, because a sorcerer said, "Take a White man, bury him alive, and the victory is assured to the MAU MAU."



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